



## Pedagogical Social Competence and Moral Message Delivery: An Exegetical-Inspired Study of Exodus 8:19 in the Context of SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk

Rolince Rumapea

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

\*correspondence: [rolincerumapea@gmail.com](mailto:rolincerumapea@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the relationship between pedagogical social competence and moral message delivery in Christian Religious Education at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. Inspired by an exegetical reflection on Book of Exodus 8:19 - "This is the finger of God" the research conceptualizes moral recognition as emerging through lived encounter rather than mere verbal proclamation. Within this framework, pedagogical social competence is understood as the teacher's ability to communicate empathetically, model ethical integrity, demonstrate relational sensitivity, and engage students interactively in moral learning processes. The study employed a quantitative correlational design using saturated sampling, involving all 90 Christian students enrolled at the school. Data were collected through validated Likert-scale questionnaires measuring four dimensions of pedagogical social competence (empathetic communication, relational sensitivity, ethical modeling, and interactive engagement) and four indicators of moral message delivery effectiveness (clarity, relevance, moral reflection, and behavioral intention). Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, and simple linear regression. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between pedagogical social competence and moral message delivery ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Regression analysis showed that pedagogical social competence significantly predicted moral message delivery, accounting for 57.8% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.578$ ). The results indicate that in primary Christian education, moral instruction is profoundly relational. Moral messages become transformative when embodied through socially competent interaction. The study contributes empirically to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by demonstrating that social competence is a decisive professional capacity in fostering effective moral formation among elementary students.*

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Professionalism, Christian Religious Education, Spiritual Identity Formation*

## INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical social competence constitutes a central dimension of teacher professionalism, particularly within Christian Religious Education (CRE), where moral formation is inseparable from relational interaction. Social competence in teaching does not merely refer to interpersonal friendliness; it encompasses communicative clarity, empathic sensitivity, ethical modeling, and the capacity to translate moral content into relationally meaningful instruction. In primary education contexts, where students' cognitive and moral frameworks are still developing, the teacher's social competence significantly shapes how moral messages are perceived, interpreted, and internalized. This study examines the role of pedagogical social competence in delivering moral messages, drawing exegetical inspiration from Book of Exodus 8:19 and situating the inquiry within the context of SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. Exodus 8:19 records the confession of Pharaoh's magicians during the plague narrative: "This is the finger of God." Within the broader literary structure of Exodus 7-12, this declaration marks a pivotal theological recognition of divine agency. According to Brevard S. Childs, the plague narratives function not merely as displays of power but as revelatory acts that expose the limits of human authority before divine sovereignty (Childs, 1974). The phrase "finger of God" signifies acknowledgment arising from confrontation with moral and theological reality. Likewise, Walter Brueggemann argues that the Exodus tradition consistently portrays revelation as both judgment and invitation, disrupting false security while opening the possibility of recognition (Brueggemann, 1994). When interpreted pedagogically, Exodus 8:19 provides a metaphorical paradigm: moral truth becomes transformative when it is recognized, not merely transmitted. Moral message delivery cannot be reduced to doctrinal explanation or behavioral regulation. Educational theory underscores that effective moral instruction requires relational credibility and social sensitivity. Lee S. Shulman emphasizes that teacher competence integrates content knowledge with pedagogical communication (Shulman, 1987). Communication itself is deeply social. Daniel Goleman highlights that social intelligence, including empathy, attunement, and influence, significantly shapes how messages are received and internalized (Goleman, 2006). In primary-level classrooms, where moral imagination is still forming, teachers' relational approaches often determine whether moral discourse fosters understanding or resistance. Moral development theory further reinforces this relational dimension. Lawrence Kohlberg conceptualizes moral growth as a progression through stages shaped by dialogue, perspective-taking, and social interaction (Kohlberg, 1984). At the elementary level, students typically operate within conventional stages, where authority and relational approval significantly influence moral reasoning. Therefore, pedagogical social competence, defined as the teacher's ability to engage students empathetically, model integrity, and communicate respectfully, becomes critical for effective moral message delivery.

The present study is conducted at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk, located in Simalungun, North Sumatra. The school includes 90 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers, including the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher. This relatively small educational environment provides a close-knit relational setting in which teacher-student interactions are highly visible and socially influential. In such contexts, social competence

may exert an even stronger impact, as students experience teachers not only as instructors but as daily moral exemplars. The homogeneity of religious identity among students and teachers does not automatically guarantee moral internalization; rather, it necessitates intentional and socially skillful mediation. Much scholarship addresses either theological exegesis or general educational competence, yet few studies integrate biblical inspiration with quantitative educational inquiry. This research therefore seeks to bridge that gap by employing an exegetical-inspired framework derived from Exodus 8:19 while applying quantitative analysis to examine measurable relationships within the school context. By integrating biblical theology, moral development theory, and educational psychology, this study aims to determine whether pedagogical social competence significantly influences the effectiveness of moral message delivery among Christian students at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. Through this approach, Exodus 8:19 is not treated merely as a historical narrative but as a conceptual lens illuminating how recognition of moral truth emerges through socially mediated encounter.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design using a correlational approach to examine the relationship between pedagogical social competence and moral message delivery at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. The quantitative approach was selected to ensure objective measurement, statistical analysis, and generalizable conclusions within the defined population. Correlational design is appropriate when the purpose is to determine the strength and direction of association between variables without experimental manipulation (Creswell, 2012). In this study, pedagogical social competence of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers functioned as the independent variable (X), while moral message delivery effectiveness served as the dependent variable (Y). The population consisted of 90 Christian students enrolled at the school and 11 Christian teachers, including the PAK teacher. Because the study aimed to assess students' perceptions of teacher social competence and the internalization of moral messages, the student body constituted the primary population for analysis. Given the relatively small population size (N = 90), this study applied a saturated sampling technique (total sampling), meaning all 90 Christian students were included as research respondents. This approach eliminated sampling error and enhanced internal validity (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed according to established theoretical frameworks in educational psychology and moral development. The pedagogical social competence instrument was operationalized into four measurable dimensions: empathetic communication, relational sensitivity, ethical modeling, and interactive engagement. These dimensions were conceptually grounded in social intelligence theory (Goleman, 2006) and pedagogical competence frameworks (Shulman, 1987). The moral message delivery instrument measured students' perceptions of clarity of moral explanation, relevance to daily life, internal moral reflection, and behavioral intention. Instrument items were formulated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Content validity was established through expert judgment involving one biblical studies lecturer and two educational research specialists to ensure theological and pedagogical alignment, particularly with the exegetical inspiration drawn from Book of Exodus 8:19. Construct validity was examined using

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to confirm dimensional coherence. Reliability testing employed Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  considered acceptable for internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). A pilot test was conducted with 20 students from a neighboring primary school with similar demographic characteristics to refine wording and eliminate ambiguous items. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage distribution) were calculated to determine the overall levels of pedagogical social competence and moral message delivery effectiveness. Prior to inferential testing, assumption checks were performed, including normality testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and linearity analysis. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. Simple linear regression analysis was subsequently conducted to evaluate the predictive influence of pedagogical social competence on moral message delivery, with statistical significance set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was interpreted to assess the proportion of variance in moral message delivery explained by teacher social competence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis involved all 90 Christian students at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk, applying a saturated sampling technique to eliminate sampling bias. Descriptive statistics indicated that students perceived the pedagogical social competence of the Christian Religious Education (PAK) teacher at a high level ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.46$  on a 5-point scale). Among the four measured dimensions, ethical modeling obtained the highest mean ( $M = 4.32$ ), followed by empathetic communication ( $M = 4.21$ ), relational sensitivity ( $M = 4.15$ ), and interactive engagement ( $M = 4.04$ ). These findings suggest that students primarily recognize moral credibility and consistency in their teacher's behavior before evaluating instructional strategies. In primary education contexts, where modeling plays a central role in learning processes, such perception aligns with social learning theory, which posits that children internalize observed behaviors from credible authority figures. Regarding the dependent variable, moral message delivery effectiveness was also rated at a high level ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ). The highest indicator concerned clarity of moral explanation ( $M = 4.24$ ), followed by behavioral intention ( $M = 4.13$ ), moral reflection ( $M = 4.05$ ), and relevance to daily life ( $M = 4.02$ ). These data indicate that students generally understand the moral messages conveyed in class and demonstrate readiness to translate them into behavioral commitment. However, slightly lower scores on relevance suggest that contextual application could still be strengthened, particularly in connecting biblical narratives to students' everyday social realities. Assumption testing confirmed that data were normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov  $p > 0.05$ ) and exhibited linear relationships, permitting parametric analysis. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between pedagogical social competence and moral message delivery ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This coefficient indicates a robust association, suggesting that higher levels of perceived teacher social competence correspond significantly with increased effectiveness in moral message communication. Within educational research, an  $r$ -value exceeding 0.70 reflects substantial practical significance, particularly in affective and moral domains where multiple external influences are typically present. Simple linear regression analysis further demonstrated

that pedagogical social competence significantly predicted moral message delivery ( $\beta = 0.76$ ,  $t = 10.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.578$ ) indicates that 57.8% of the variance in moral message delivery effectiveness is explained by pedagogical social competence. This substantial explanatory power underscores the centrality of relational and communicative dynamics in moral education at the primary level. The remaining 42.2% may be influenced by family upbringing, church involvement, peer interactions, and broader sociocultural factors not included in this model. When analyzed dimensionally, ethical modeling showed the strongest correlation with behavioral intention ( $r = 0.81$ ), suggesting that students are most influenced by what teachers consistently practice rather than solely by verbal instruction. This finding resonates with moral development theory, particularly the view that children at elementary stages rely heavily on observable authority behavior when forming moral judgments (Kohlberg, 1984). In this respect, the teacher functions not only as communicator but as embodied curriculum. Empathetic communication also demonstrated a strong relationship with moral reflection ( $r = 0.72$ ). Students who perceive their teacher as attentive, respectful, and understanding appear more inclined to internalize and contemplate moral messages. This dynamic aligns with social intelligence theory, which emphasizes that emotional attunement enhances receptivity and cognitive openness (Goleman, 2006). In practical terms, moral instruction becomes transformative when students feel relationally safe and psychologically acknowledged.

Relational sensitivity correlated strongly with perceived relevance of moral content ( $r = 0.69$ ), indicating that teachers who demonstrate awareness of students' social realities are better able to contextualize moral teaching effectively. Interactive engagement, while slightly lower in correlation ( $r = 0.64$ ), still significantly contributed to overall moral message clarity. Active dialogue, questioning, and participatory learning appear to reinforce comprehension and retention of ethical principles. These findings resonate meaningfully with the narrative framework of Book of Exodus 8:19. In that text, Pharaoh's magicians declare, "This is the finger of God," recognizing divine agency through observable events. Recognition arises not merely from proclamation but from experiential encounter. According to Brevard S. Childs, the plague narratives function as revelatory confrontations that compel acknowledgment of divine reality (Childs, 1974). Likewise, in the classroom context, students' moral recognition appears to emerge when moral truth is embodied and relationally mediated rather than abstractly declared. The metaphor of the "finger of God" suggests visible, tangible evidence of moral authority. In pedagogical terms, ethical modeling serves as such visible evidence. When teachers demonstrate consistency between speech and action, students perceive moral authenticity. This authenticity fosters recognition analogous to the magicians' confession—an acknowledgment that transcends mere cognitive agreement. Pedagogical social competence operates as a contemporary medium through which moral truth becomes recognizable and credible. The small-scale relational environment of 90 Christian students and 11 Christian teachers intensifies the impact of social competence. In close-knit school communities, teacher behavior is continuously observed across academic and non-academic settings. Consequently, relational consistency becomes a decisive factor. Students encounter their teachers not only during formal instruction but also in informal interactions, reinforcing the salience of ethical modeling. The strong predictive value ( $R^2$

= 0.578) also suggests that moral message delivery in primary Christian education is largely relational rather than purely cognitive. While theological content remains foundational, its communicative effectiveness depends substantially on social competence. This finding challenges reductionist approaches that treat moral education as curriculum coverage. Instead, it supports integrative models in which communication style, empathy, and relational credibility shape moral internalization. These results highlight the necessity of strengthening social competence training within teacher professional development programs. While subject mastery remains important, primary-level PAK teachers require systematic cultivation of empathic communication skills, reflective self-awareness, and ethical consistency. Social competence is not an incidental trait but a professional capacity that can be developed through intentional training. Certain limitations warrant consideration. The study relied on student self-report data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference beyond predictive association. Longitudinal studies could explore whether sustained exposure to high social competence produces lasting behavioral transformation. Future research might also incorporate qualitative classroom observations to triangulate perceptual data with behavioral evidence. The findings demonstrate that pedagogical social competence significantly influences the effectiveness of moral message delivery at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. Ethical modeling, empathetic communication, and relational sensitivity emerge as decisive factors in shaping students' moral understanding and behavioral intention. Inspired by the theological motif of recognition in Exodus 8:19, this study affirms that moral truth becomes transformative when it is socially embodied and relationally mediated. Within Christian primary education, therefore, social competence is not peripheral to moral instruction—it is its essential conduit.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that pedagogical social competence plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of moral message delivery at SD Negeri 095239 Silau Puluk. Quantitative findings reveal a strong and statistically significant relationship between teachers' social competence and students' reception of moral instruction ( $r = 0.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with 57.8% of the variance in moral message delivery explained by pedagogical social competence ( $R^2 = 0.578$ ). These results indicate that moral education in primary Christian contexts is deeply relational rather than merely instructional. Among the examined dimensions, ethical modeling emerged as the most influential predictor, followed by empathetic communication and relational sensitivity. This pattern demonstrates that students internalize moral messages primarily through observable integrity and consistent behavior rather than through verbal explanation alone. In elementary education settings, where moral reasoning is still forming, the teacher's lived example becomes an embodied curriculum. Social competence, therefore, functions not as a supplementary skill but as the central medium through which moral values are rendered credible and actionable. Interpreted through the theological lens of Book of Exodus 8:19, the findings illuminate the importance of recognition in moral formation. Just as the magicians' acknowledgment, "This is the finger of God" arose from experiential encounter rather than abstract proclamation, students' moral understanding emerges most effectively

when moral truth is visibly and relationally demonstrated. Pedagogical social competence enables this recognition by translating moral principles into lived, observable practice within the classroom community. The results also underscore that institutional Christian identity alone does not guarantee effective moral formation. Even within a relatively small Christian school community of 90 students and 11 Christian teachers, intentional relational engagement is required to transform moral teaching into internalized conviction. Professional development efforts should therefore prioritize strengthening teachers' empathic communication, ethical consistency, and relational awareness alongside doctrinal and pedagogical competencies. Although the study provides strong statistical evidence, future research may expand the explanatory model by incorporating additional variables such as family environment, church participation, and longitudinal behavioral outcomes. The present findings affirm that in Christian primary education, social competence is the essential conduit of moral instruction. Moral messages become transformative not merely when they are spoken, but when they are socially embodied.

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